



Gradual Decline of Joint Family System in the Urban Area: A Study in Patna Town

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Abstract : Family bonds are a link to our beginning and a guide to our future. The family structure in our society is changing from time to time. The traditional form of the joint family could not exist in the cities due to several factors. This disintegration in the recent decades has led to a number of problems: increased rate of divorces, remarriages, lack of family values amongst children, increased rate of crime amongst the elderly. These trends and the resulting problems that they cause, especially for the children, have brought the advantages of the traditional joint families back into focus. The objectives of this study were to find out the existing family pattern in Patna, the reasons behind the existing pattern of the family and its impact on the family members. 100 couples (age 25 to 40 years) from Patna (Boring Road, Patliputra) were taken for the study and data was collected through an interview schedule. The findings of the study clearly suggested that the nuclear family is more prevalent than the joint family system in Patna due to industrialization/

urbanization of young couples. Parents, on the other hand, did not want to stay with their children, because at this age they found it difficult to adjust in a new environment. The study also brought forward the fact that members living in a nuclear family suffered from certain emotional problems (loneliness, stress, and anxiety) and other lifestyle issues. Women staying in nuclear families also stated that they faced many problems in the upbringing of children all alone. Couples (especially fathers) were toiling day and night with little time at home to spend with their own kids, due to which children were becoming more selfish and less sensitive. Based on these conclusions, certain suggestions were formulated. Although it is difficult to put forth the proposition of the existence of the joint family system in our society again, yet, certain steps could be taken to revive the culture.

Keywords: Family pattern, Joint family, Nuclear family, Family members, Impact.

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Introduction :

Family is where our roots take hold and from where we grow. A sense of belonging is derived from the strong bond of family. Family bonds are a link to our beginning and a guide to our future. Family bonds help to instill trust and hope in the world around us and belief in ourselves. Rituals of bedtime stories, hugs, holidays and daily meals shared together, provide a sense of warmth, structure and safety.

Family can be basically categorized into two groups:

- (1) **Nuclear family :** A nuclear family can be defined as a household consisting of a father and mother and their children, who share living quarters.

- (2) **Joint family** : Joint family can be defined as father, mother, sons, daughters-in-law and grandchildren staying together.

Silent changes have been taking place in the family life of India for the last few decades. The old joint family system has been disintegrating and nuclear families are taking its place.

There have been several causes that have provoked the disintegration of our old joint family system in India. The main causes are:

- Industrialization
- Urbanization
- Education
- The impact of western culture
- Marriage system
- Social legislations
- Over population
- Problem of accommodation
- Extension of transport and communication
- Empowerment of women
- Family quarrels
- Decline in agriculture and village industries

Problems of Study :

In India, the joint family system has been in existence since ancient times. The father is considered as the head of the family. Then the wife, sons, daughters-in-law and grandchildren together constitute a joint family. The head of the family feels proud of the great number of members. However, with the passage of time, the joint family system has disintegrated, giving rise to the nuclear family system.

The rising trends of the nuclear family is resulting in various problems, such as, increasing rate of divorce, remarriage, behavioural instability, lack of love and of a sharing nature, loneliness, depression, improper upbringing of children and lack of family values.

Purpose of the Study :

Although it is not possible to rediscover and restart the system of joint family all over again, yet through this study an attempt was made to find out the root cause of

the breaking up of this age-old system and how relationships can be mended even while staying apart from each other. By highlighting the causes of disintegration of the joint family system, family members would realize how and where things are going wrong and how they could maintain good relationships even from far apart. This will not only help the elderly parents and the young couples but will also help in preparing a more emotionally stable future generation, who gets support and love from all the corners of the family whether far or near.

Objectives:

1. To study the existing pattern of family structure in Patna town.
2. To find out the reasons behind the existing pattern of family structure.
3. To find out the kind of relationship families share with the distant family members and the role each and every family member plays in maintaining those relationships.
4. To find out the impact of existing family patterns on the members of the family.

Hypotheses:

1. Family members are not playing a significant role in bridging the gap in the distant relationships.
2. The family members living in the nuclear family suffer from emotional instability and loneliness.
3. The nuclear family system is more prevalent than the joint family system in Patna town.
4. Urbanization/industrialization is one of the major factors contributing to the prevalence of the nuclear family system.
5. Economic independence of the young generation has also led to the decline of the joint family system.

Review of Related Literatures :

Literatures related to family structure and impact of modifications : In an article 'City Women Prefer Nuclear families'(Chitra Nair) it was highlighted that the woman, who holds a well-paying job, wanted to live in a separate house "to avoid complications later". It

is concluded that almost 72% of Pune women prefer to live in a nuclear family, as opposed to just 50% men who favors the idea.

A study, 'Social Value of Parents and Children in Joint and Nuclear Families' (Anshubhi B, Nisha D), was conducted to assess the effect of modifications that are taking place in the family under rapid on-going socio-cultural changes in contemporary Indian society. A sample was taken from the Allahabad City. The results show the family structure does not effect social values in the family.

In an article Nuclear Vs. Joint Families (Deepa Mehta), it was highlighted that due to the western impact on our Indian culture, young couples prefer the new form of living that is the nuclear family. The western companies and their corporate culture have laid a very heavy impact on today's youth. As a result these couples, after marriage decide to live independently away from the joint family set up.

Methodology :

- **Area of the Study :** Married Couples (25 to 40 years) from the following areas of Patna would be taken for the study:
 - Boring Road
 - Patliputra
- **Sampling :** Sample size – 100
 - Married couples (25 to 40 years)Data was collected from the nuclear members in selected areas in Patna.
- **Data Analysis Technique :** Tabulation and frequency distribution method was taken from data analysis.
- **Statistical Analysis :** Percentage was drawn from the respondent's orientation.

Result and Discussion :

Objective – 1 : To study the existing pattern of family structure in Patna town.

The figure clearly shows that - 'Nuclear family system is more prevalent than joint family system in Patna town' which also approves the third hypothesis of the study.

Objective – 2 : To find out the reason behind the existing pattern of family structure

It is clear from the figure that the need of the respondents, due to which they were not living in a joint family, was better job prospects. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis which is 'industrialization/ Urbanization is one of the major factors contributing to the prevalence of the nuclear family system' is approved.

A majority of the respondents were not in their family occupation. And it is clear from the figure that the major reason behind this was economic independence, that is, preference for independent earning and spending, without anyone's interference. Therefore, fifth hypothesis - 'Economic independence of the young generation has led to the decline of the joint family system' is approved.

Objective – 3 : To find out the kind of relationship families share with the distant family members and the role each and every family member is playing in maintaining these relationships.

The figure clearly indicates that the majority of the respondents were celebrating special occasions with their parents and relatives on a regular basis.

Further, it was seen that the respondents informed their parents about their own children's achievements. From the above explanations, we can conclude that the first hypothesis - 'Family members are not playing significant role to bridge the gap in distant relationships.' is disapproved.

Objective – 4 : To find out the impact of existing family patterns on the members of the family.

The figure clearly shows that a majority of the respondents living in nuclear families suffer from anxiety and stress.

The figure clearly indicates that quite a number of respondents living in a nuclear family faced various lifestyle problems, such as, indigestion, migraine etc.

A majority of the respondents complained that their children lacked a sharing nature and they agreed that this quality was due to staying in a very small-sized family with few family members.

The given figure clearly indicates that the major problem faced by the woman staying in a nuclear family was upbringing of children.

From the figure it is clear that the other major problem faced by the respondents was an extremely busy lifestyle and no one to share responsibility. The above given tables and figures clearly indicate that the

second hypothesis - 'The family members living in the nuclear family suffer from emotional instability and loneliness' is approved.

Conclusion :

- It is very clear from the study that the nuclear family system is more prevalent than the joint family system. Industrialization/Urbanization was one of the major factors contributing to this prevalence.
- Economic independence was also instrumental in the decline of the joint family system.
- The study further highlighted that the couples were playing a significant role to bridge the gap in this distant relationship.
- The study brought forward the fact that family members living in a nuclear family suffered from certain emotional problems, loneliness and other lifestyle issues.
- Women staying in nuclear families also stated that they faced a lot of problems in bringing up the children all alone.

Suggestions :

- If the couples are busy and not able to meet their parents on a regular basis, they should make arrangement for their children to visit their grandparents as frequently as possible.
- Couples can plan holidays together with their ageing parents and spend some quality time together.
- Young couples should keep some money separately saved for their parents, which can be used in a time of emergency (such as medical, financial or any other crisis).
- Whenever the young couples visit their parents, they should make it a point to arrange a thorough medical check-up for their parents.
- Media should also play an important role to help revive this culture of the joint family system by making children watch programmes where they would learn the importance of joint families.
- The couple should frequently keep talking about the grandparents and close family members to their children in a positive way so that the memories of their grandparents are not completely washed out from their minds because they do not meet them on a regular basis.

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Table 1. Family patterns of the respondents

SI. No	Family Pattern	Number	Percentage %
1.	Joint Family	15	15
2.	Nuclear Family	85	85
3.	Extended Family	Nil	Nil
	Total	100	100

Table 2. Emotional problems respondents suffered from

SI. No	Reasons	Numbers	Percentage %
1.	Depression	23	23 %
2.	Loneliness	15	15 %
3.	Insomnia	8	8 %
4.	Anxiety and stress	54	54 %
	Total	100	100 %

Table 3. Characteristics of a child staying in a nuclear family

SI No.	Characteristic	Number	Percentage
1.	Being Materialistic	3	3%
2.	Self – Centred	22	22%
3.	Lack of Compassion	18	18%
4.	Insensitive	15	15%
5.	Lack of a Sharing Nature	52	52%

Table 4. Problems faced by the respondents (lady) staying in the nuclear family

SI No	Characteristic	Number	Percentage
1.	Upbringing of the child	50	50%
2.	Inculcating moral values in the child	20	20%
3.	Managing regular household activities	30	30%
4.	Managing the study of the child	30	30%
	Total	100	100

LIST OF FIGURES

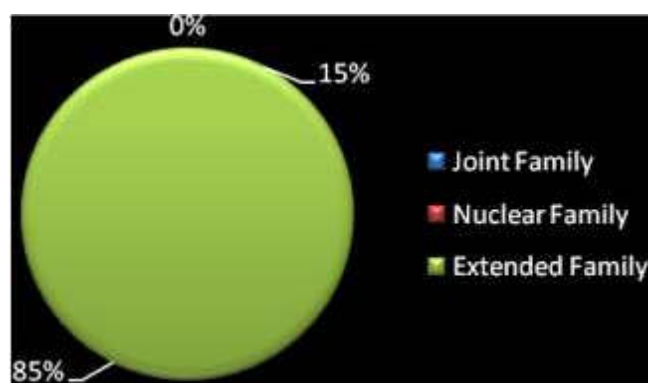


Fig. 1. Family Pattern of the respondents

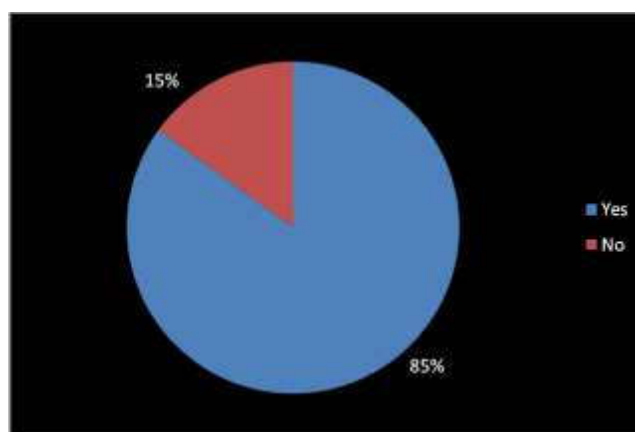


Fig.5. Respondents sharing their achievement with their parents

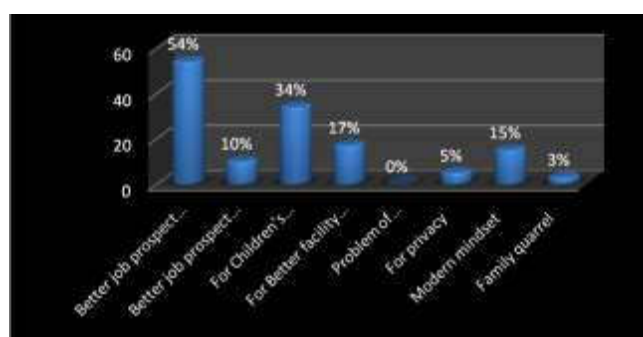


Fig. 2. Reasons for staying in a nuclear family

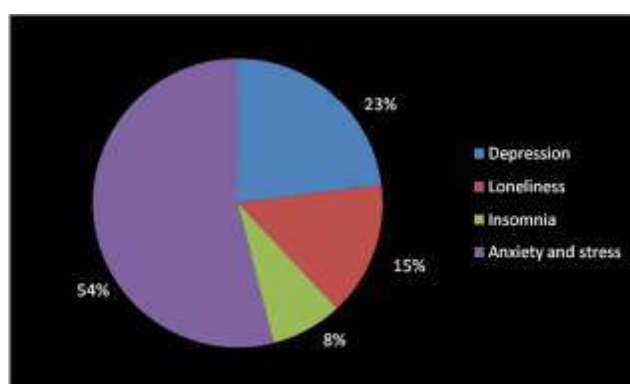


Fig. 6. Emotional problems respondents suffered from

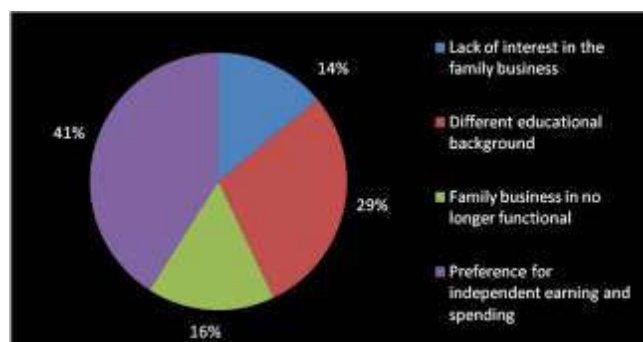


Fig. 3. Reasons for not being involved in family business

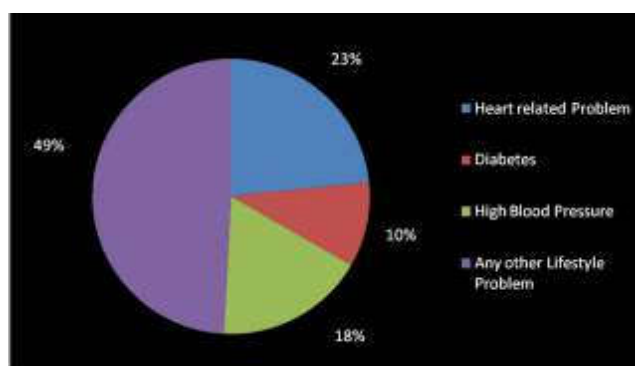


Fig. 7. Physical problems respondents suffer from

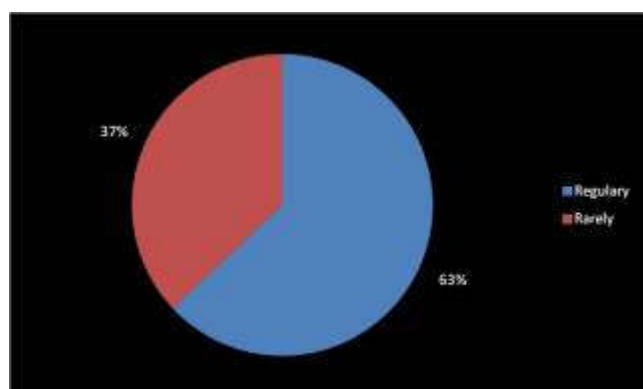


Fig. 4. Celebrating special occasions with the family members

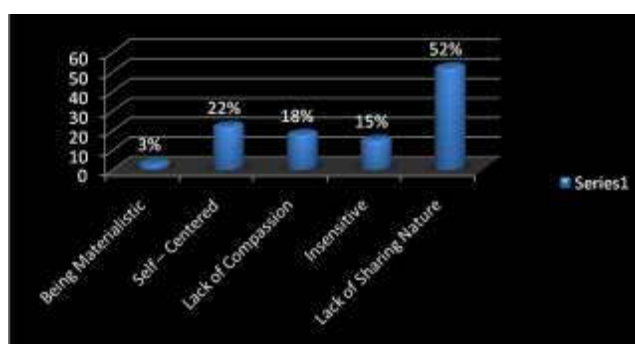


Fig. 8. Characteristics of a child staying in a nuclear family

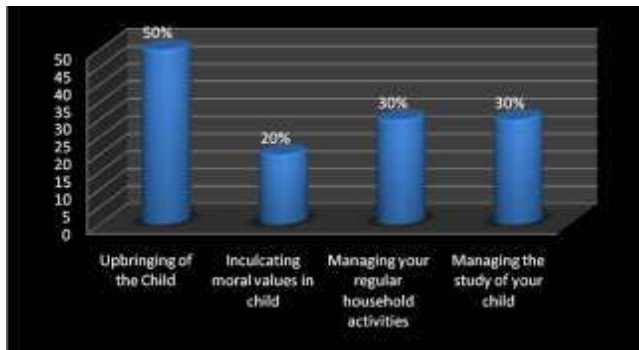


Fig. 9. Problems faced by the respondents (lady) staying in the nuclear family

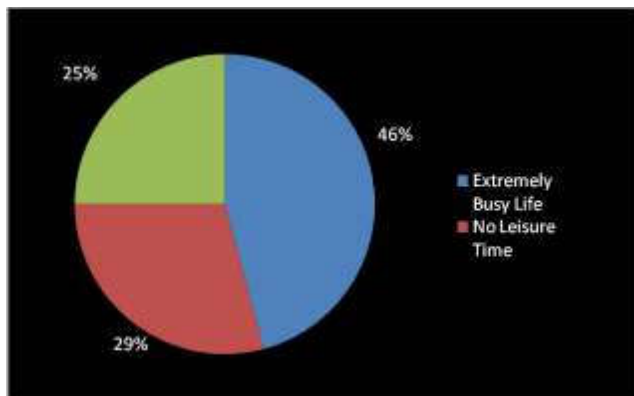


Fig.10. Problems faced by the respondents living in the nuclear family

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